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AUTHOR Rauch, Margaret; Fillenworth, Ceil
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ABSTRACT

The Reading Center at St. Cloud State University provides individual and small group assistance to students needing help with academic course work, as well as two classes for credit. Recently the center has been pairing a reading and study skills course with a traditional academic course, such as biology. A review of the literature concerning paired courses reveals that such courses can be beneficial to students in a variety of ways. Students between the 33rd and 50th percentile of their high school graduating class are admitted to the university under the division of General Studies Program, in which the paired course instructional model is used. Success of this program depends on the selection and training of faculty and staff who are willing to work closely with high risk students and to devote extra time and energy to course preparation. At the end of the fall quarter of 1984, 333 of the 385 students in the program completed an anonymous questionnaire. Results showed that students felt that the program had helped them and that they could ask their teachers for assistance at any time. The paired classes were found to positively affect students' grade point averages, self-concept, and retention. (Tables of findings are included.) (DF)

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Paired Courses: One Method for Enhancing Academic Success

Margaret Rauch and Ceil Fillenworth

St. Cloud State University

Paper Presented at

The Minnesota Post-Secondary Reading Council's State Conference

White Bear Lake, Minnesota

April 20, 1985

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Many students who enroll in a college or university require academic support to succeed in their courses. The traditional role of a Reading Center or Learning Skills Center is to provide assistance to students who experience difficulty in their courses. This assistance can be categorized into four models:

1. Centers which provide help on an individual or small group basis.

2. Centers which offer courses such as reading and study skills and reading rate improvement. The courses may be remedial or developmental in nature. Students may or may not receive credit for the courses.

3. Centers which participate in a paired course instructional model. For example, a study skills course may be paired with a traditional course such as biology.

4. Centers which provide a combination of the above models.

The St. Cloud State University Reading Center provides a combination of the above models. Specifically, the Reading Center provides individual and small group assistance to students needing help with developing reading skills or needing help with academic course work. Two classes are also offered: Reading/Study Skills and Reading Rate Improvement; both courses are for credit and, in addition, the Reading Rate Improvement course may be used as a general education elective. The most recent development has been the Reading Center's involvement in the paired course instructional model used in the Division of General Studies program.

This paper is divided into four major sections: Description, Administration, Working Together, and Results. Information concerning

the definition of paired courses and a review of the literature concerning paired courses are included in the description section. The administration section focuses on the selection of students and faculty. The working together section includes information on how reading instructors and traditional content area instructors coordinate instruction and assistance to students; it also includes information on how reading instructors, tutors, and students work together. The results section contains data gathered on the Division of General Studies program.

Description

Definition

At St. Cloud State University a paired course instructional model is one in which traditional academic courses such as theatre, human biology, industry, and courtship and marriage are each paired with a section of a reading/study skills course or a reading rate improvement course. The purpose of pairing courses is to help students integrate reading and study skills strategies with their traditional academic courses. That is, paired courses can enhance transfer of learning from a study skills course to studying for a traditional course.

Paired courses can be helpful to students and instructors in several ways. One, there is greater potential of transfer of learning from the study skills course to studying for the traditional course. Two, relevancy of skills taught in the study skills course

increases because of close coordination of relevant study skills used to study information in the traditional course. Three, students may be more motivated to develop relevant skills because their grades in both the study skills course and the traditional course will be affected. Four, because of coordination of teaching across disciplines, there is increasing instructor awareness of student needs in different disciplines. Instructors meet and discuss mutual concerns. For the Reading Center, the paired course concept is also a way to increase awareness of the services of the Reading Center.

In the literature, paired courses are usually called adjunct classes with the adjunct being a noncredit study skills course. Usually, the student does not pay tuition for the study skills course. At SCSU the reading rate improvement course counts as a two credit course toward graduation. Beginning Fall Quarter, 1985, it was also included as a general education elective. The reading/study skills course was traditionally a noncredit course even though students paid tuition for two credits. Beginning Fall Quarter, 1985, the study skills course was offered for two credits toward graduation.

Review of the Literature

The paired course instructional model was proposed at SCSU because a review of the literature indicated that this model yielded positive results in students' academic achievement. The literature continues to include information on the successfulness of this model.

Tomlinson and Tomlinson (1975) described a biology adjunct study skills class. Thirty students volunteered to attend a noncredit adjunct study skills class Fall Quarter, 1974; the class met for three times a week for eight weeks. In addition to the study skills which were taught, the investigators stated that another important element included in the adjunct biology study skills class was the lecture review. The adjunct instructor attended the biology class and provided a set of questions based upon the lectures. The purpose of this procedure was to assist students in developing questioning skills while they were learning notetaking skills. Using the biology notes as the instructional material was both relevant and a motivating factor for the students. To ensure accuracy of biology information, an advanced undergraduate or graduate student was included as an instructor of the study skills class. Results showed that eighteen students attended a majority of the sessions and there was about a 15-20% drop out rate. Data was kept on students in the study skills class who enrolled in the second course in the biology series. Although these students were seven points below the class average on the first test in the first class in the biology series, the students maintained a ranking which equaled the class average at the end of the second biology course. In addition, more adjunct students completed the second freshmen biology course: 57% to 31% of the controls. Tomlinson and Tomlinson caution that a motivation factor should be acknowledged because the adjunct students volunteered to attend and other students did not want to enroll. The researchers also discussed the results from the fall, 1975, study. Not all the students who wanted to attend the biology study skills class were able to because of conflicts; therefore, the students who could not attend became the control group. Results showed that the experimental group (N=59) had significantly higher scores on the midterm than the control group (N = 45).

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Wilson (1978) reported on the achievement of a pilot group of 25 students enrolled in a lower division history course and attending an adjunct study skills class. The five goals of the program included improving students' study strategies, transfer of study skills to other courses, increasing students' awareness of themselves as learners, providing a group experience with a common course (history), and increasing students' awareness of study strategies. The history course was selected because students gave high ratings to both the professor and the course. The range of students in the course included freshmen through seniors. The adjunct course met for two hours a week for a total of 13 sessions. The academic course structure dictated the sequence of contents in the study skills course. Although data revealed no significant differences between the experimental (pilot group) and control group on several predictative measures including grade point averages, there were positive results. The results of a post course questionnaire was positive. The final grade average of the experimental group in the history course was 2.9 (N=24) and the control group was 2.7 (N=45). This difference

was not significant; however, the grade averages of the students (N=11) who completed 10 of 13 reading and study skills sessions was 3.2 as compared to a grade average of 2.7 (N=45) of the control group. This was a significant difference.

Randall (1981) discussed the reading/history course developed at Christopher Newport College, Newport News, Virginia. Randall asserts that reading instructors should go beyond teaching the usual reading and study skills. Randall states that the reading teacher should provide more in-depth help to students. For example, the reading/history course Randall was involved with included information on finding and reading primary sources and introduced students to the idea of perceiving events and asking questions from a historian's viewpoint.

The preceding discussion of adjunct courses indicates that many of the adjunct type classes result from the combined efforts of two interested faculty, one from the content area and the other from a Learning Skills Center. This initial interest can grow into a well integrated program. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire program is such an example. Harding explained the extensive, well developed and coordinated program of adjunct courses offered at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Several categories of students are advised to take the adjunct courses: (1) students repeating a course, (2) students returning after suspension for low grade point average, (3) students admitted on probation, (4) students returning after a

long absence from schooling, and (5) students identified by advisors or the Academic Skills Center tests as being learning disabled or having skill deficiencies. The majority of the students fit into category five. Beginning level difficult courses which are taught by concerned faculty are selected for the adjunct program. The courses are team taught with the team consisting of the traditional content area instructor and an appropriate learning skills specialist, one in reading, writing, or math. The traditional content instructor attends a five day seminar in Developmental Education. After being selected to teach an adjunct course, the instructors meet for a three hour in-service program. Through extensive planning, the two instructors coordinate teaching activities. Students attend class five days a week; Monday, Wednesday, Friday the content area instructor teaches and on Tuesday and Thursday the skills specialist teaches. The learning skills instructor usually attends every content class. Some content instructors attend every skills class and some instructors attend occasionally. The overall purpose of the adjunct classes is to integrate needed skills with the content class. For example, typical reading and study skills taught include notetaking, textbook reading approaches, study strategies, and test taking skills, vocabulary development, and time management. Students receive feedback from both instructors, especially after a low test grade. Results of the program were positive.

Hisrich (1982), also from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, in his Review of Existing Academic Support and Student Services Program, divided the adjunct class concept into more refined categories. One, the adjunct instruction model is the one Harding described. Two, the team instruction model is similar to the adjunct model. The difference is that both instructors attend all five days of class - three content classes and two basic skills classes. Instructors share responsibility for planning, teaching, and grading the integrated course. Three, the single faculty instructional model is an outgrowth of the adjunct class model. That is, after working with a learning specialist, the content teacher may accept total responsibility for teaching the learning skills and the content. The course continues to meet five days a week. Fourth, the paired course instructional model combines two entry level courses, for example, chemistry and English. Again, the purpose for the pairing is to integrate skills. That is, writing can enhance and reinforce chemistry concepts. Hisrich cites data indicating the positive results of the program. Included is information indicating that the retention rate of academically high risk students in the Special Services program is 63.1% at the beginning of the students' third semester. This compares favorably with the 69% retention for all freshmen after one year. Hisrich states there is a high correlation between retention and early academic achievement. In addition, student evaluations concerning the classes and Support Services have been extremely positive.

To summarize, the literature indicates the positive potential of the paired course instructional model. As Tomlinson and Tomlinson (1975) indicate, one reason for the success is that students more easily integrate reading and study skills taught in coordination with a content class. The relevancy of the information which directly impacts course grades may be a powerful motivating factor. While most researchers stress that results not be generalized beyond the situation studied, results do indicate that teaching a reading and study skills course in conjunction with a traditional content area class has the potential to help students academically.

The following information focuses on the organization and preliminary results of the paired course instructional model developed at St. Cloud State University. The model is used in the Division of General Studies Program, a program developed to assist high risk students.

Administration

Admission Requirements of the University

Students are regularly admitted to the University if they are in the upper half of their graduating class. Students may also be admitted if their combined math and verbal SAT score is 900 or if their ACT score is 20 or higher. Students twenty-one years of age or older and who have not previously attended the University are also admitted.

Students who are in the 33-50 percentile of their high school graduating class are conditionally admitted to the University under the Division of General Studies Program. In some cases students are admitted even if they are below the 33 percentile of their graduating class if their combined test scores equal 33 percent or higher.

Administrative Structure of the Division of General Studies

The program has a director and two part-time coordinators. Both coordinators are responsible for program development and student advising, while one coordinator is responsible for advising faculty and the other is responsible for teaching faculty. Both coordinators must be easily accessible to faculty who have questions and concerns they wish to discuss regarding student progress, teaching strategies or course development.

Faculty Selection

An integral part of the program is the selection of faculty who are willing to work closely with high risk students. Teaching faculty are chosen not only for their mastery of content, but also their ability to present it in ways most conducive for learning. It is essential that faculty be "people oriented" and willing to devote extra time and effort to meet with students. Advising faculty are selected for their knowledge of the University and for their sensitivity in dealing with students. Because of the extra time involved, each advisor in the program is given only ten advisees instead of the usual twenty.

Faculty do not receive extra remuneration for their efforts. Even so, many of the faculty have been with the program since it was implemented Fall Quarter, 1982, and have often taught multiple sections of courses with high risk students.

Training Program for the Teaching and Advising Faculty

It was found that the best time to hold informational sessions for teaching faculty was in the spring of the year. This ensures ample opportunity to meet with one's "pair" before the busy Fall Quarter begins and to lay the ground work for courses to be taught in the winter and spring quarters of the following year. The spring seminar offers time to exchange ideas and to develop new strategies with the help of authorities in the field from outside the University.

Advising faculty meet in the fall of the year shortly after school has begun. Faculty are knowledgeable concerning University regulations; therefore, it only remains to update them on paired classes and any additional requirements of the program. Often techniques for detecting potential student difficulties are discussed and advisors are strongly urged to contact the coordinators if they have questions or concerns regarding any of their advisees.

Selection of Classes for the Division of General Studies

Special care is taken to ensure that classes selected for the Division of General Studies are not "watered down" in any way. Indeed, several courses are selected because they have been historically difficult for the freshman student. Most classes are general education courses required of all students at the University. Some are general

education electives, and two are self-help courses in study skills and expository writing. Great care is taken in pairing the courses. At times two faculty members may share an interest in content. For example, an astronomy class is paired with a course in expository writing because the writing teacher has an interest in astronomy and science fiction. The astronomy teacher requires written assignments. The two instructors meet to adapt content and strategies so the "pairing" is evident and reinforces material taught in both courses. A more traditional pairing occurs when a content course is paired with a class in study strategies. In this instance, the study skills class will utilize the course content of its "pair" to teach learning strategies, and the content course will reinforce the strategies learned in the study skills class.

The focus of the Division of General Studies is to retain capable students. In order to achieve this goal faculty and staff must be willing to devote extra time and energy to course preparation and student contact. Due to the extra demands placed on the faculty, no matter how voluntary they may be, it is not uncommon to find faculty "burning out" from the extra committment. Faculty are encouraged to discuss their problems with the coordinators, and it is essential to inform the faculty that their efforts are greatly appreciated. In addition to formal seminars and workshops, informal get togethers, social in nature, lend support to those who are feeling overwhelmed by their load, and assistance is readily available from veteran members for those who need a boost in morale.

Student Orientation

Orientation to the Division of General Studies begins with a letter of acceptance sent to the students in which the student is informed that s/he is admitted conditionally to the University in the Division of General Studies. During summer orientation the student is given a more complete explanation of paired classes and what is expected of a student entering the University. Students also receive written information. Summer orientation is a time of much information collecting and new experiences, and it was determined that having written information to examine at a less hectic time made understanding of the University more comfortable. Summer orientation meetings are held in small group sessions of about 20 students. Specially selected orientation advisors are chosen for the task. They must be skilled in the clear dissemination of information. The pace is fast, the mood upbeat, and the majority of the students leave orientation impressed with the University and favorably disposed toward the Division of General Studies.

Working Together

To succeed, the paired course instructional model must have the strong, continued support from the administration. The success of the paired course instructional model also depends upon the working relationship between three groups of people: (a) the reading and study skills instructors and traditional content area instructors; (b) the reading and study skills instructors and the students; and (c) the

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reading and study skills instructors, tutors, and students. The working relationships between these groups of people will be discussed.

Reading and Study Skills Instructors and Traditional Content Area Instructors

Although instructors throughout the University refer students to the Reading Center, there has not been an extensive, specifically organized interaction between the Reading Center and instructors in other disciplines. The Division of General Studies program changed that environment. By its very nature, the paired course instructional model used in the DGS program demands a degree of coordination of efforts.

The coordination of efforts usually follows a sequence of steps. First, the instructors are paired as previously discussed. Next, the instructors meet and discuss their courses; the information shared includes information on textbooks, teaching styles, papers, projects, number and types of tests, and difficulties former students have had with the courses. Finally, the study skills instructor discusses how the reading courses, either reading and study skills or reading rate improvement, could be coordinated with the traditional content area course. The content area instructor provides the reading instructor with a copy of the textbook, syllabus, and any additional information such as tests and handouts. Thereafter, the two instructors meet to discuss student progress and changes in the coordination of teaching efforts.

Positive results have been achieved from the pairing of reading instructors and instructors from other disciplines. First, pairing

enhanced the University's awareness of services offered by the Reading Center. This has meant a greater cooperation between academic departments and the Reading Center. Second, pairing has increased instructors' awareness of student difficulties in the courses. The result has often meant that instructors have developed a more structured approach to teaching. This structured approach has included guide-sheets given to students before tests, sample test questions, attendance requirements, structured syllabuses, closer follow-up with students performing at a low level in the courses, and, in general, more interest in helping high risk students succeed academically.

Reading and Study Skills Instructors and Students

The following list of student characteristics exemplifies the characteristics exhibited by students in the Division of General Studies. This list encompasses the characteristics discussed by Miles (1984) and Harding.

1. Students may have had an inadequate high school preparation for college resulting in inadequate reading and writing skills and inadequate study skills. In fact, some of the students may be learning disabled.

2. Students may exhibit a poor attention span and a lack of motivation for studying.

3. Students may have a poor academic self-concept resulting in the possibility of easily becoming discouraged by academic demands of instructors and course materials.

4. Students may be underprepared for large classes and the lecture system.

5. Students may exhibit passive behavior in that they do not actively seek out assistance from instructors, other students, or support services such as the Reading Center.

6. Students often do not manage time well. They may be unrealistic regarding the extent of time it takes to complete assignments and study for tests.

7. Some students do not see the correlation between attending class and the potential for a higher degree of comprehension of the course information.

8. Students may be concrete in their thinking and experience difficulty in problem solving and generalizing from examples.

Specific methods of working with high risk students have been developed to alleviate the effects of some of the characteristics. For example, the structured approach to teaching courses discussed in the previous section is helpful. Students need to know and understand exactly what they are required to do. Many of these requirements can be addressed in the syllabus. Other requirements need to be specifically addressed in class. Immediate and continued feedback on progress is essential. Instructors are asked to test early in the quarter so students know the intense amount of studying required to pass the course. Students who are not performing well in their courses may be asked to obtain assistance from both their content instructor and reading instructor. Often students will not seek assistance until they have done poorly in an exam or paper; therefore, the first test score or grade on a paper is important. After the first test grade, students are more apt to be receptive to try specific study strategies which will enhance the probability of attaining a higher grade on the next test/paper.

Reading and Study Skills Instructors, Tutors and Students

The Reading Center operates a peer-tutoring program. Tutors may be recruited through the work-study program, a program designed to help students with a financial need. The Reading Center has also received some student help funds to hire tutors. The general qualifications of these student tutors include a major in education with an interest in reading, successful academic record, and faculty recommendations indicating the student tutor's capability to work successfully with students. Many of the tutors have taken the reading courses and/or have completed the traditional content area courses with which the reading courses are paired.

If the tutor has completed the content area course paired with the reading course, the tutor works as both a tutor and teaching assistant. Tutoring activities include scheduling small group and one-to-one tutoring sessions with students referred by the reading instructor. Teaching assistant activities include helping the reading instructor write a guidesheet of questions if the content area instructor does not provide one. If the content area teacher does provide a guidesheet, the tutor may answer the questions for the reading instructor. The tutor may answer student questions concerning tests and assignments and help students develop strategies for studying for tests.

There are many advantages to having tutors work with students. If the tutor has had the content area course and sometimes the same instructor, the student may more easily relate to the tutor because

s/he provides relevant information and insightful understanding. The tutors have been helpful to the reading instructors because tutors can provide a perception of the courses from the student's perspective. Furthermore, tutors may suggest specific study strategies which can help students attain a better understanding of the material and thus a better test score. Another advantage to having tutors work with students is that tutors provide a measure of encouragement and student support. Instructors are supportive but students definitely appreciate the cheers of the tutors, their fellow students who have been through the process.

In summary, a healthy working relationship between the tutors, instructors, and students enhances the potential for success. Next, the specific results of the Division of General Studies program concerning the reading classes paired with content area courses will be discussed.

Results

Data on students' achievements and students' perception of the program have been collected. This data includes information concerning grade point averages, withdrawal rate, retention, and students' perception of the program, in general, and of the reading classes, in particular.

Student Evaluation of the Division of General Studies

At the end of Fall Quarter, 1984, 333 of 385 students in the Division of General Studies completed an anonymous questionnaire evaluating the program. The results were positive regarding students' perception of the effectiveness of the program. A summary of the findings yields the following information:

1. 57% felt they were doing better in their classes than they would have done without the program.
2. 63% felt the classes were mutually supportive.
3. 42% felt the classes helped them stay in school.
4. 48% felt they would not have learned as much if they had taken the classes separately.
5. 83% felt that they had the support of their English or reading teacher, and could receive extra help if they needed it.

It is the response to this last question which is the core of the program. Dedicated, caring instructors are essential if the program is to succeed. However, one concern which faculty stated must be acknowledged. Faculty members completed a questionnaire evaluating their feelings toward the students and the program. Two themes were unanimously evident: (a) The program is needed and effective; (b) faculty feel the stress and frustration resulting from lack of time to meet with students and the need to search for a variety of ways to explain course concepts. In addition, it is difficult to motivate some students; this lack of motivation is often painful for instructors who care about their discipline and about students learning information.

Ways must be found to keep excellent faculty within the program. These plans could include workshops,seminars, informal social events, and a support system to whom the faculty can turn with questions and concerns. Finally, it is essential that faculty know what they do is

appreciated by the administration. Monetary rewards are not always necessary to maintain an excellent staff within a program. However, personal acknowledgment from the administration and departmental support are essential.

Student Evaluation of the Reading Courses

Students in the reading courses complete an anonymous teacher evaluation at the end of each quarter. The reading instructors analyze the evaluations not only to determine how Division of General Studies students evaluate the reading courses and their instructors but also to determine if these student evaluations differ from evaluations of students enrolled in reading classes attended by students other than DGS students, that is, all-university students. Division of General Studies students must select paired courses from a set schedule of courses; this schedule includes traditional content area courses paired with English composition courses and reading courses. In contrast, all-university students elect to enroll in the reading courses. The overall evaluations from both groups of students have been positive. A summary of the results of four questions from the Winter Quarter, 1985, teacher evaluations completed by students (N=80) attending all-university reading classes and DGS students (N=61) attending the paired reading classes is as follows:

1. 85% of the students in the paired reading classes and 79% of the students in the all-university reading classes felt they were putting a good deal of effort into the reading courses.

2. 82% of the students in the paired reading classes and 85% of the students in the all-university classes felt the objectives they had for taking the courses were met.

3. 85% of the students in the paired reading classes and 90% of the students in the all-university reading classes would recommend the reading courses to a friend.

4. 72% of the students in the paired classes and 64% of the students in the all-university classes felt the level of difficulty of the course was about right. 20% of the students in the paired classes and 16% of the students in the all-university classes felt the level of difficulty of the reading courses was somewhat elementary. In contrast, 7% of the students in the paired classes and 16% of the students in the all-university classes felt the level of difficulty of the reading courses was somewhat difficult.

Grade Point Averages

St. Cloud State University has the following grade point average requirements: (a) 1.5 GPA after the first quarter; (b) 1.75 GPA after the second quarter; and (c) 2.0 GPA thereafter. If a student does not achieve a 1.5 GPA after the first quarter, the student must achieve a 2.0 the second quarter or be subject to dismissal from the university. Students may appeal the dismissal.

Grade point averages of students in the Division of General Studies are reported in Table 1. Overall, the results are positive. In addition, the grade point averages of students within the DGS program were compared with the GPA of all SCSU freshmen. The average GPA of all freshmen Fall Quarter, 1984, was 2.38. As can be expected, the average GPA of freshmen

Table 1 Current and Cumulative Grade Point Averages for Students Enrolled in Reading Courses
Fall Quarter, 1982 through Fall Quarter, 1984

Quarter	Class Type	Total Enrolled N	Overall Current GPA	N	Current GPA: Students Passing Reading Course	N	Overall Cumulative GPA	N	Cumulative GPA: Students Passing Reading Course	N
Fall 1982-84	Paired	436	2.16	431	2.27	404	2.16	431	2.26	404
	All-Univ.	218	2.47	201	2.57	189	2.43	201	2.49	190
	Support (Fall,83)	46	2.18	46	2.18	44	2.18	46	2.18	44
Winter 1983-84	Paired	249	2.14	235	2.21	220	2.15	235	2.16	220
	All-Univ.	121	2.77	105	2.82	100	2.67	106	2.7	101
	Mixed (W-84)	23	2.19	21	2.23	20	2.20	21	2.23	20
Spring 1983-84	Paired	73	1.83	69	2.08	58	1.85	69	2.01	58
	All-Univ.	257	2.61	226	2.74	205	2.47	233	2.58	212

Definition:

Paired - Reading course "paired" with a traditional content area course. Students in the Division of General Studies must take paired courses.

Support - All the students in the reading course were in the Division of General Studies, The support course was not paired with a traditional content area course.

All-University: Students (freshmen through seniors) elect to enroll in the reading course.

Mixed - Students in the Division of General Studies are enrolled in the same reading class as all-university students. The "mixed" statistics refer to results of Division of General Studies students.

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graduating in the upper 50% of their high school class was higher (2.47) than freshmen in the DGS paired classes (2.02). Some students accepted into the Division of General Studies Program made a late decision to enroll at the University; therefore, there were not enough paired courses scheduled Fall Quarter, 1984, for these students and they had to enroll in general university courses. Grade point average results showed that students in paired classes achieved a higher level of performance than students who did not enroll in paired classes (1.03). In addition, a breakdown of grades of students who took paired classes in Fall, 1984, and who carried 12 or more credits was examined. The results presented in Table 2 show that a majority of the students were able to meet or exceed the University requirement of 1.5 GPA for the first quarter.

Table 2

Fall, 1984, Grade Point Averages of DGS Students Carrying 12 or More Credits

GPA	# of students	% of students
3.0 - above	32	10%
2.5-2.9	71	22%
2.0-2.4	101	32%
1.5-1.9	106	33%
below 1.5	9	3%
TOTAL	319	

Table 3

STUDENT RETENTION AT SCSU FOR NEW ENTERING FRESHMEN
FALL QUARTER

Year	Total N Entering Freshmen	Overall % Returning Next Year	H.S. Rank	N Entering	% Returning Following Yr.	Reading Classes: Class Type	New Entering Freshmen	% Returning Following Year
1976	2032	68%	50-99 0-49% Unknown	1,384 520 128	73% 57% 64%			
1977	2102	66.6%						
1978	2060	65.1%	50-99 0-49% Unknown	1,512 463 85	70% 51% 52%			
1979	2081	66.9%						
1980	2254	66.1%						
1981	2238	67.3%	50-99 0-49%	1,705 533	69% 54%			
1982	1985	67.7%	50-99 0-49%	1,666 317	70% 63%	DGS All- Univ.	126 40	69% 83%
1983	2355	71.2%	50-99 0-49%	1,892 451	73% 60%	DGS All-Univ.	161 33	59% 88%

An analysis of the grade point averages, Table 1, shows that the average grade point averages for students enrolled in reading courses usually exceeds 2.0. Additional data reveals the following:

1. 91% of the students (N=758) pass the reading courses paired with content area classes. Data includes Fall Quarter, 1982, through Fall Quarter, 1984.

2. 87% of the students (N=748) pass the traditional content area courses paired with the reading courses. Data includes Fall Quarter, 1982 through Fall, 1984.

3. The withdrawal rate for students (N=758) in the paired reading classes for the period of time stated above was 3%. The withdrawal rate for students (N=596) enrolled in all-university reading classes for the same period of time was 8%.

Retention

Table 3 reflects the retention rate at SCSU. The retention rates for all students remains relatively the same until 1983 when an increase occurs. An important concern for the Division of General Studies Program is the retention rate of capable students. Table 3 shows that in Fall Quarter, 1982, 126 students were enrolled in the DGS reading classes and 69% of these students returned the next fall. This return rate is better than the return rate of the total freshmen class (67.7%). In fact, the 69% return rate of the DGS students in the reading classes compares favorably with the return rate of 70% of freshmen students who graduated in the upper half of their high school class. One reason for the high return rate of students in the paired reading classes may be the motivation of students. In fall, 1982, the DGS program was implemented and

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students in the lower 50% of their high school graduating class were given the choice of two tracks. Track A meant students would elect to take paired classes. Track B meant students were not requesting additional help provided through paired classes. An assumption which can be made is that students requesting the DGS paired classes were motivated and serious about staying at the University, and additional data appears to support this assumption. An overall analysis of the retention rates of high risk students in paired courses showed a 61% retention rate in contrast to a 55% retention rate for high risk students in the no pair group.

Because results of the first year of the program were positive, the following year all students graduating in the bottom 50% of their high school class were required to take paired courses. The retention rate of DGS students entering in Fall Quarter, 1983, and who took paired reading courses was 59%. Although this retention rate was not as positive as the previous year, it was better than students who did not take paired classes the previous year. A further analysis of the retention rate of DGS students showed 60% of the students in the paired reading classes returned and 57% of the students in the support reading classes returned. Some of the students made a late decision to enroll in the University, so two reading and study skills classes were arranged as "support classes" and some of the late entrants were scheduled into these classes which were not paired with traditional content area classes.

An overall analysis of the retention rates of students in paired reading classes shows that these students return at a higher rate than

students attending the University before the DGS paired class program was implemented. Data from three previous years shows the following concerning retention rate of students who graduated in the bottom 50% of their high school class: (a) 57% of the new entering students enrolled in Fall Quarter, 1976, returned; (b) 51% of the new entering students enrolled in Fall Quarter, 1978, returned; and (c) 54% of new entering students enrolled in Fall Quarter, 1981, returned. This data indicates that the Division of General Studies program does have a positive effect on student retention rates.

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Summary

The data reveals that paired classes integrating reading and study skills with traditional content has a positive effect on students' grade point averages, self-concept, and retention. Information also reveals that while instructors have a positive attitude toward the paired course concept for high risk students, many feel that the demands of the program can be overwhelming in both course preparation and number of student contact hours. However, the instructors agree with the philosophy advocated by Charles Pine, Rutgers University physics professor and winner of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education's 1984 professor of the year award. Dr. Pine's remarks were summarized in the NEA Higher Education Advocate (April 22, 1985):

> ... Pine identified three major aspects of effective teaching. First: "Think about why the student needs this, how will he use it?" The goal, explained Pine, should be to teach students how to apply what they learn. Second, be ready to adapt your methods to the student. ...Third, be prepared to "walk the extra mile" and search for ways to inspire and motivate. Above all, noted Pine, the successful teacher cares about the student.

The instructors teaching paired classes for high risk students do try to incorporate Pine's three ingredients for effective teaching within their courses. Most of all they care about their students and perhaps this is why the student evaluations of the program have been so positive.

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